

## Message Text

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12

ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03

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R 161628Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8178

INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 00766

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UK, SE, IO

SUBJECT: DISPOSITION OF BIOT ISLANDS

REF: STATE 010677

1. EMBASSY ODFICER CONVEYED CONTENTS REFTEL TO HEAD OF FCO HONG KONG AND INDIAN OCEAN DEPARTMENT, LAWRENCE O'KEEFE. ON THE BASIS OF DISCUSSIONS SO FAR THIS WEEK WITH MANCHAM AND RENE, FCO BELIEVES THREE OF THE FOUR CONDITIONS WE HAVE OUTLINED CAN BE MET WITH MINIMAL DIFFICULTY:

A) FUTURE U.S./UK ACCESS TO THE THREE ISLANDS IF NEEDED WILL BE AGREEABLE TO THE SEYCHELLES DELEGATION;

B) DENIAL OF THE THREE ISLANDS TO HOSTILE POWERS SHOULD ALSO BE ACCEPTABLE AND MANCHAM IS FAVORABLY ON RECORD ON THIS POINT. THE BRITISH ARE INCLINED TO EXPAND THE DENIAL ARRANGEMENT TO INCLUDE THE ENTIRE ARCHIPELAGO WHILE PRESERVING UK (AND U.S.) RIGHTS. AGAIN, THE SEYCHELLES IS LIKELY TO AGREE TO SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING IN KEEPING WITH THEIR SELF-IMAGE OF THE "SWITZERLAND OF THE INDIAN OCEAN."

C) CONTINUATION OF THE U.S. SATELLITE CONTROL  
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FACILITY SHOULD POSE NO OBSTACLE, ALTHOUGH THERE MUST BE

FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS TO INCLUDE DUTY FREE PRIVILEGES AND TO ESTABLISH A REASONABLE RENTAL.

2. THE BRITISH FORESEE SOME DIFFICULTY ON OUR FOURTH CONDITION, THE REGULAR USE OF MAHE CIVIL AIRFIELD BY U.S. AND UK MILITARY AIRCRAFT. THE SEYCHELLES LEADERS WILL WANT TO KNOW WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND, AND THE BRITISH WOULD PREFER LESS DEMANDING LANGUAGE SUCH AS "OCCASIONAL USE BY NON-COMBATANT MILITARY AIRCRAFT." EMBASSY OFFICER REPLIED THAT THE U.S. WANTS TO ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE OF ACCESS BUT PROBABLY HAS NOT YET THOUGHT OUT THE TERMS OF THAT ACCESS. THE SEYCHELLOIS, O'KEEFE SAID, FIXED ON SWITZERLAND AND NOT SOMALIA, WILL WANT US TO BE MORE SPECIFIC IN FORTHCOMING NEGOTIATIONS. (O'KEEFE WAS PUZZLED WHY THE U.S. HAS INCLUDED THE CONDITION AT ALL. GIVEN OUR ACCESS TO DIEGO GARCIA, HE REASONED, WE HAVE NO APPARENT NEED FOR GUARANTEES IN SEYCHELLES.)

3. DURING THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE NEXT WEEK, THE BRITISH WILL CONFIDENTIALLY INFORM THE SEYCHELLOIS THAT THE U.S. IS IN ACCORD IN PRINCIPLE WITH THE RETURN OF THE THREE ISLANDS SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS. THEY WILL PROPOSE A TRIPARTITE MEETING IN LONDON, CHAIRED BY THE UK, TO DISCUSS THE TERMS OF THE TRANSFER. O'KEEFE SUGGESTED THAT THESE DISCUSSIONS SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE U.S. - SEYCHELLES NEGOTIATIONS ON THE SATELLITE FACILITY SINCE THE TWO ISSUES ARE NOW LINKED. THE BRITISH HOPE TO PERSUADE THE SEYCHELLES DELEGATION NEXT WEEK TO PUT THE QUESTION ASIDE FOR THE TIME BEING AND NOT PERMIT THE THE ISSUE TO OBSTRUCT PROGRESS ON OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS.

4. MANCHAM WILL NEVERTHELESS WANT TO DEMONSTRATE PUBLICLY SOME SUCCESS IN NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE THREE ISLANDS WHEN HE RETURNS HOME. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN IMPENDING TRIPARTITE CONFERENCE IN LONDON WOULD PRESUMABLY SATISFY THIS NEED.

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